

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Leave and Remain voters united in support for independent environmental protection body

A new poll commissioned by conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland has revealed that the public overwhelmingly agree that a new, independent environmental watchdog is needed to ensure that existing EU environmental protections remain in place after Brexit, and that government actions are properly scrutinised.

The European Commission and the European Court of Justice currently help to monitor and maintain environmental laws in EU member states, covering issues such as air and water quality, and the protection of wildlife. These bodies are independent of government, and have resources and expertise to launch investigations and, if necessary, to fine governments.

1,000 Scots were surveyed last month and 81 per cent of respondents said they would support or strongly support the creation of an environmental protection body to ensure that Scotland upholds similar levels of environmental protections as currently. Sixty-seven percent of those polled thought that this body should be independent of government.

Support for a new body was high, regardless of whether respondents had voted Leave or Remain in 2016, at 81% and 91% respectively, and support was also strong across party political boundaries, with majority support among previous SNP (90%), Labour (87%), Conservative (79%), and Liberal Democrat (88%) voters.

The polling also found that the public wanted the watchdog to be able to effectively hold government to account. In addition to being independent of government (67% of respondents), those polled also supported the new body having the power to require the Scottish Government to report on progress (69%), to be able to accept complaints from the public (71%), to be able to initiate investigations, and where necessary to be able to take enforcement actions against the Scottish Government (60%).

The results of the poll, have been published in Trust research paper 'The accountability gap: Scottish environmental protections post-Brexit' in which the organisation calls for robust environmental protection after Britain leaves the EU.

Author of the paper, The National Trust for Scotland's Head of Public Policy, Diarmid Hearn said: "Scotland's environment needs strong protection. That's why we are asking for an independent watchdog to ensure that the high standards that are currently enforced through the EU continue to be upheld in the coming years. With the impact of climate change, the pressures of development and many other challenges ahead, this has never been more important.

"With 367,000 members, the National Trust for Scotland has a huge voice within Scotland, and we all united by our wish to protect what makes Scotland so special. It's right that we play our part in pushing forward these priorities to the people in power, so that our heritage is protected for future generations."

The National Trust for Scotland is, as part of the Scottish Environment LINK network, campaigning for a whole range of protections to safeguard our environment after 31 October. The Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign seeks to safeguard and enhance Scotland's environment at all levels.

